



## Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

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[1] THE NETWORK “LANGUAGE USE IN NORDIC ACADEMIC SETTINGS”

In 2013, a Scandinavian research network, *Language Use in Nordic Academic Settings* (LUNAS) was formed. The network, which was funded by Nordplus, unites researchers from Denmark, Norway and Sweden working in the fields of lexicography, computational linguistics, second language acquisition, and didactics in second language teaching. The main purpose of the network has been to share information and experiences on academic language use in the Scandinavian countries in educational settings and in research, but of equal importance is to identify common issues and interests within the field and to benefit from joint efforts in language resource development and research. In May 2016, the LUNAS network organized a large international conference at the University of Copenhagen on academic language use and academic literacies from a multilingual perspective in Nordic educational contexts. The articles presented in this volume show some of the results of the cooperation within the LUNAS network since 2013, but also present research from invited guests and other researchers interested in these topics.

As a result of the Scandinavian collaboration, the need for carrying out research on large collections of academic texts has been outlined. All three countries have now compiled large corpora of academic texts, although the corpora differ somewhat in size and balance. For instance, while the Norwegian and the Danish corpora are composed of texts from a wide range of disciplines, the Swedish corpus has a preponderance of texts from the humanities and social science. Apart from corpora, monolingual Norwegian and Swedish academic word lists have been extracted using diverse state-of-the art statistically-based methods in language technology and corpus linguistics. In addition, a monolingual Danish academic word list and a bilingual Norwegian-Swedish academic word list are in the process of being established by researchers from the LUNAS group.

The preconditions for studying academic language have varied across the Scandinavian countries, and this has influenced the research carried out in the

project groups. Research in Norway has focused on the development of a corpus and lexical resources. A similar focus has guided the research in Sweden, as well as several ongoing research projects in pedagogical and educational topics relevant to academic language use. In Denmark, no academic corpus was available at the onset of the LUNAS project, and the main research focus in the field of academic language had previously been on education in academic English as a second language. These different perspectives are reflected in this volume of collected papers, which, as a result, consists of three different parts: one with a focus on the pedagogical challenges and educational perspectives, one with a focus on the linguistic perspectives and one more generally related to describing academic language with varying approaches.

## [2] THIS VOLUME

This volume gives a sample of ongoing research in the field of language use in Nordic academic settings. The selection of papers is based on contributions to the conference at the University of Copenhagen in May 2016.

The review processes were conducted by inviting a selection of conference participants to submit a contribution to this volume. Each paper was reviewed by two expert researchers in the field. Papers with minor or moderate revision suggestions were accepted for publication.

The reviewers listed in alphabetic order are: Dorte Albrechtsen, Anne Golden, Hana Gustafsson, Glenn Ole Hellekjær, Anne Holmen, Håkan Jansson, Sabine Kirchmeier, Anne Kjærgaard, Lars Anders Kulbrandstad, Maria Kuteeva, Robert Lew, Monika Mondor, Sanni Nimb, Andreas Nord, Claes Ohlsson, Karl-Heinz Pogner, Ida Seljeseth, Philip Shaw, Emma Sköldberg, Sofia Tingsell, Ole Togeby, Urd Vindenes and Johannes Wagner.

## [3] CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE PLENARY SPEAKERS AT THE LUNAS CONFERENCE

Before providing a brief summary of the content of all the chapters, we want to highlight some of the issues raised in the three invited contributions to this volume by the plenary speakers at the LUNAS conference. These are Sylviane Granger, Averil Coxhead and Brian Paltridge (article written in collaboration with Marie Stevenson). These chapters give some important insights concerning theory, research methodology and pedagogical practice for the area of academic language use – both from an L1- and L2 perspective.

Sylviane Granger's contribution on academic phraseology incorporates all three of the different perspectives mentioned above. Nowadays, the necessity of giving phraseological units the same amount of attention as individual words

is a widely shared view among researchers investigating L2 acquisition and L2 vocabulary learning. When it comes to research on academic language use (both L1 and L2), however, phraseology has only recently started to come in for serious consideration. The discussion concerning the different methodologies that have been used to compile different lists of academic phrasemes raises important questions regarding the criteria to be applied to determine which multiword units should be extracted from academic texts and which should be included (or excluded) in a final list to serve as a resource for academic writing. These are questions that are ultimately concerned with the nature of academic language, i.e. which phrases are characteristic for academic language use and which of those are worth teaching to student groups with increasingly heterogeneous backgrounds. Granger argues that, besides linguists' and practitioners' perspectives, the L2-learners' perspective needs to be included in the equation. One way to achieve this is to ensure that research on academic language, as well as the resources that result from such research, are also informed by learner corpus research, which can pinpoint the particular challenges that students experience when writing academic texts in their L2. Another important issue raised in the chapter is the comparison of L2 users' academic writing to the writings of novice native academic writers. As is often pointed out, academic language is a new language even for the latter group; this, however, does not mean that the needs and challenges for the two groups are identical, and this needs to be taken into account, e.g. when developing resources like academic word- and phrase lists for the different target groups.

The differences between academic vocabulary and the vocabulary of everyday language and the challenges that they provide for students (especially those studying in their L2) are central issues in Averil Coxhead's contribution. By focusing on teachers' language use and the importance of this input for the development of students' academic vocabulary, Coxhead highlights a problem that teachers in higher education, also in the Nordic countries, are increasingly concerned about, i.e. the transition between upper secondary school and university education. This transition presents immense difficulties to many students when it comes to the language that they are expected to use, since the gap between general language use and academic language is simply too big. New university students are, in other words, expected to use a style and vocabulary that is new to them and that they haven't encountered before. To raise teachers' awareness of their own use (or lack of use) of academic language in their teaching is therefore an important goal for research on academic language use from a didactic perspective.

Brian Paltridge and Marie Stevenson's contribution to this volume discusses

academic writing from a slightly different perspective by focusing on its relationship to the type of writing assignments students have to perform in their future professions (rather than its function as a means of communication in higher education and the research community). The question as to how far and in what way academic writing in higher education prepares students for writing tasks in their future work place is by no means an obvious one, and the contribution therefore highlights an important issue related to student competence development. The chapter also provides important insights into the advantage of triangulating different methodologies when researching the relationship between academic writing and writing in the workplace.

#### [4] THE OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS VOLUME

In the following, we summarize the content of the remaining contributions to this volume, divided into three sections, namely:

- Pedagogical Challenges and Educational Perspectives
- Specific Linguistic Perspectives on Academic Language Use in the L1 and L2
- Other Research Perspectives on Academic Language.

##### [4.1] *Pedagogical Challenges and Educational Perspectives*

Anne Sofie Jakobsen: *From Implicit Norms to Explicit Skills - Focusing on Danish Academic Vocabulary* starts with a discussion of the function of academic language and the challenges L2 language users have in developing skills in academic language use. The main focus is on the discrepancy between presentations of academic vocabulary and academic language in guidance literature on academic writing and the requirements learners face in real academic writing. Such requirements are treated as implicit norms in the students' education, and the author argues for a more explicit focus on academic language skills in the Danish educational system.

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir: *Preparing EFL Students for University EMI Programs: The Hidden Challenge* discusses the challenges that Icelandic students meet when they study English at university level in Iceland. These challenges are rarely acknowledged, even though most students struggle to express themselves in adequate academic English. This is mainly due to the fact that, throughout the Icelandic educational system, English is taught more with an emphasis on literature and general conversational skills rather than on the mastery of academic writing skills in different academic genres. The paper analyses the academic

language use of students at various proficiency levels of English in different learning contexts and outlines an established course in English as an L2 as a way to meet the different needs of the students.

[4.2] *Specific Linguistic Perspectives on Academic Language Use in the L1 and L2*

Marte Monsen and Sylvi Rørvik: *Pronoun Use in Novice L1 and L2 Academic Writing* describes the use of pronouns in novice academic writing in L1 Norwegian and L2 English by L1 Norwegian writers, with a focus on first person pronouns. The study provides quantitative data that sheds new light on pronoun use in student writing, and on differences between English and Norwegian academic writing. The main findings reveal differences in the frequency of use of pronouns in the two languages, with a tendency for students to use the first person pronouns in a similar way in both languages, despite the fact that the use of these pronouns are discouraged in English academic writing, whereas it is encouraged in academic writing in Norwegian.

Päivi Pietilä: *Linguistic Complexity in Academic Writing: Comparing Tasks in L2 English* addresses the important and tricky issue of operationalizing syntactic and lexical complexity in student writing and reports on a small scale study based on the analysis of three types of texts written by students of English in academic contexts. The study measures syntactic and lexical complexity in the student texts with different levels of formality and personal involvement. The results are in line with previous international research on L2 writing. The context in which the study was carried out is relevant for the present thematic focus on academic language use in a Nordic setting, as the data were collected from undergraduate and Master's students at a Finnish university.

Eva Olsson and Liss Kerstin Sylvén: *Validity in High- and Low-Stakes Tests: A Comparison of Academic Vocabulary and some Lexical Features in CLIL and non-CLIL Students' Written Texts* is a validation study involving high- and low-stakes essays that are part of a large longitudinal Swedish research project in CLIL. Their study focusses on the use of upper secondary student's productive English academic vocabulary and other linguistic features, such as text length, word length and variation of vocabulary. They argue for the need to establish validity in relation to writing assignments in high- and low-stakes contexts in a more general sense, for instance with regard to the role of effort and motivation.

Sofie Johansson, Kristin Hagen and Janne Bondi Johannessen: *A Bilingual Academic Word List: The Merging of a Norwegian and a Swedish List* demonstrates how two monolingual academic word lists in Norwegian and Swedish compiled by different methods are merged into a bilingual list. Methodological issues on compiling academic word lists are discussed as well as crucial differences and

similarities in Norwegian and Swedish academic language use. The conclusions of the article are that, irrespective of method, there are unexpected differences. In addition, the article lists examples of cognates and false friends in the two languages.

#### [4.3] *Other Research Perspectives on Academic Language*

Jonas Nygaard Blom, Marianne Rathje, Bjarne le Fevre Jakobsen, Kenneth Reinecke Hansen, Jesper Tinggaard Svendsen, Alexandra Holsting, Thit Wedel Vildhøj and Anna Vibeke Lindø: *Linguistic Deviations in the Written Academic Register of Danish University Students* shows that Danish university students studying Journalism and Danish respectively make a lot of, often serious, mistakes in their academic writing. The study concludes that the students are not proficient in neither Danish orthography nor in grammar. In addition, the article discusses the methodological problems involved in quantifying and describing linguistic deviations (defined as orthography and punctuation).

Elisabeth Dalby Kristiansen: *English as an Interactional Resource for Doing Being Academically Competent: Student Practices in Group Meetings* interprets the interactions in a supposedly English-only environment in terms of the language ideologies and practices. Using an ethnomethodological approach combined with conversation analysis, she investigates how the students adapt to and adopt English as part of their day-to-day work as students, and how they negotiate their position in the student group through their academic language use. Her conclusion is that this activity does not necessarily lead to better competence in what the author terms ‘institutionalized English’, which is the important pedagogical question which needs further discussion and research.

#### [5] CONCLUDING REMARKS

We would like to thank all the contributors of this volume, the reviewers, and the LUNAS-conference participants.

We would also like to thank Nordplus for funding the research network and the Carlsberg Foundation for supporting the LUNAS conference financially.

Finally, we would like to thank our local universities and institutions for encouraging and supporting our work on academic language use in Danish, Norwegian and Swedish.

We hope that readers of the papers of this volume will appreciate the ongoing research in the field. We intend to keep on participating and contributing to research on language use in Nordic academic settings in the future.

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